

Building Worlds
A supporting paper
Submitted to the graduate faculty of the Department of Art
University of Minnesota
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Preamble

I am a sound artist, a potter, a photographer, a maker and a mother. The last three years have been a moment for me to focus and expand my practice. To deeply consider the work I do and take time to craft ways to respond to my concerns, rather than react. Taking my practice from the margins and centering it. I have built my studio practice to create pieces of what I need. My work began with an investigation of self/identity and expanded to family/culture and spans back to my ancestors*. My history is rich with innovation, making something from nothing,

In observing the younger women, that seems to be the one thing that they are missing. The ability to take nothing and make everybody think that something is there.

Nikki Giovanni

sharing what we got, and always being grateful for the bounty. I carry the stories of the past both mine and my ancestors. When I enter my studio, my choices, my ideas/visions are allowed to become tangible, giving me the space to express the lessons passed on to me. This is when I am able to live, have control, create with the idea that anything is possible, through tending my relationships, or making other worlds. My grandmother's influence permeates my life, through her absence, or distance rather, I have always been in pursuit of her grace. Ever enamored of Murdear, she was so precious to me, the black woman elder with wisdom and knowledge to help navigate this place. From her I heard the stories of Hettie, her mother. My one living ally was my father, always my father, he and he alone (in our family) understood what it meant to be black in this city, I was daddy's girl.

The Following is an account of what brought me to this practice.

One can only give one's audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the limitation, the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies of the speaker.

Virginia Woolf

I resist writing. When I build a sentence, I'm trying to find the words that will hold and express the full meaning that I'm trying to convey, but by defining I am stripping it of the multitude of layers, limiting the meaning, pinning it down or fitting it into a box that may not be quite right. I also know there is so much that English lies about. I know the language lies, as it was proven when the officers in the Rodney King trial were acquitted of wrongdoing when we all saw what they did, and we all know it was barbaric, stripping Rodney of his humanity by making him the scapegoat for their bad behavior. It said he made them treat him that way because he did not lay still while they beat him. And it was codified by law in a courtroom with 12 of his "peers". That is when my belief in the justice system died. My belief that those with power were just misunderstanding us, having a hard time believing the atrocities we speak of. That's when I knew it was a set up. Keeping us busy, showing the system set up to break us down. To get us on a path that we can never get off of. But I have created my own path. And although I had a judge tell me I was guilty of transgressing because I wanted happiness in my life more than money. I took this step to fulfill my childish dreams in this capacity. I spent three years dreaming, creating, building relationships across the ocean and bringing some back here. These years were not without systemic problems. But I found a community of Artist advisors who were in it for the same reasons. And we were able to make some beautiful moments. Moment's worthy of true *Moment hoing**! The collective dream of "All Humans are created equal" was still in question as we awaited the verdict in the current murder of George Floyd Trial. We all watched that man kneel on his neck and watched George take his last breath. We are clear on who killed him and how. And now we have to hear arguments that would take the responsibility and accountability away from that barbaric man. And for me I don't trust a language that can do that and sanction it by law.

*Ancestor	hold answers for life. Skeet 1900-1959 Son, Brother, Husband, uncle, Musician Murdear 1919-1998 Daughter, Sister, Mother, Grandmother, musician, gardener Hettie 1878-1972 Daughter, Matriarch, Mama, Sister, restaurant owner, Farmer Uncle Joe 19xx-19xx Son, Husband, storyteller.
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Moment Ho	Following the signs to sit and be grateful for the goodness that is happening in the moment.
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Morgan,

I choose to moment ho because there is so much beauty in the world that I miss because I'm so distracted by the sad things and the bad things. People asking for money when you drive off the highway, on the street waiting for a place to go. It hurts me to see it daily

and I help when I can make a dent. Moment ho'in when I let the woman in daddy's house in Alabama, stay just because she can use a day off, a year off, a moment. I try to create a beautiful moment to bathe in it. Be it a perfect smoking moment, sitting outside in the morning sun, drinking a warm coffee and watching the smoke drift on the breeze. A moment when you let me in and tell me a detail about how you think or what you dream of. Because I need those times like I need breath. To combat the fact that we as humans don't do better. We know right from wrong. But even my mother who gave birth to me, thinks first about getting a good price (good deals on wrapping paper) before standing up for injustices, like boycotting a store known for racist practices. So, I moment ho, to grab a second, to breathe, to dream, to recharge my battery, because we are not promised these things and if we don't pay attention, we will miss them.

"Make no mistake", Ola had said, "the people themselves must help one struggle with the truly eternal questions, that's why a resistance movement is invaluable.

-Alice Walker *The Temple of My Familiar*

In this document I use the format of a recipe, [1.A set of instructions for preparing a particular dish, including a list of the ingredients required. **1.1**Something which is likely to lead to a particular outcome. **1.2** *archaic* A medical prescription.] What is in the following pages are recipes for making art or possibly building a different world. The recipes you find in these pages are a suggestion. A place to start, use what fits and adjust what doesn't. This was my path. I began this work using my work as a prescription, a tonic to enhance a good feeling or occasion or counter an assault on my heart. I settled on the format of the recipe, because in our family food is not only nutrients. It is love, it is decadence, it is luxury, it is **The** one way we can pamper our beloveds with our whole heart. It is nourishment for body and soul.

This document is written with this knowledge.

This is about my practice of living freely, as motivation for a *future*. Finding work with meaning. To me this looks like engaging with my family, friends, and neighbors. Tending to our lives. Listening to our stories, making our music, living all my childish dreams. I'm writing this to document my practice in other ways of knowing

Native scholar Greg Cajete has written that in indigenous ways of knowing, we understand a thing only when we understand it with all the four aspects of our being: mind, body, emotion, and spirit.
(Braiding Sweetgrass).

Remembering to listen to our bodies, our hesitations, our concerns, where does our consciousness go? When making, being in collaboration with our materials, means we must first have an understanding of the limitations they have, and respectfully playing with these limits. I'm sharing this because there *are* other worlds. The time here has been spent exploring old limits through building in clay larger and more experimentally than I had the ability to before, taking dreams, imaginings into a tangible three-dimensional existence. Expanding my knowledge base to learn about building environments in the virtual world and experimenting in film. Traveling and bringing together my theories as well as humans, to build connections across the ocean.

All that I've made first starts with a picture, a vision. A dream of an idea for my heart to embrace. A reason to rise each day. Life is made meaningful by the beliefs we hold. I have made my choice. My heart guides me to think of relations, how I tend to these gifts I have, a home, a family, friends and community. If we think of each being as family, take care and let them know they are loved, they are considered-

What would it look like?

If we were to offer sustenance, and shelter, the basic needs for survival, would we have a different outcome.

So much is lost in solely thinking of self. It cuts us off from the love that expands us.

To gather and share, giving rise to our dreams, taking time to reflect. Moving our bodies, making sound into song, sharing thoughts to make stories. Creating our narratives from the ideas we hold. Making and making and making our world. Putting together my dream with yours. There is enough to go around, there is more than enough.

Doing, being and breathing in shared space is the only way to bring these recipes to life. I will put words together on paper to share these ideas. Please understand this document is only half the story, my work is done in collaboration and in that way it's an improvisation. Therefore, I cannot say what is exchanged in the moment. There is so much listening that must take place in the moment and the answers come in the form of a feeling to which there are no words. I cannot relay those messages; you must learn to hear yourself.

Thinking about pressure/touch...even your touch stones are small
places of grounding

That you carry with you...there's so much room for metaphor

Touchstones as metaphor for peace of mind...creating and carrying
your own peace...kinesthetic memory...generational memories carried
cellularly...saved in kinetic gestures...transforming ceramic into
diamonds, functional diamonds, diamonds as everyday tools.

People(2 scoops of Zora Neale Hurston a dash of Marie LaVeau etc)

--Keegan Xavi 2020

I began to make my world, I'd like to share it with you, Come cook with me...

When I was a child it was clear to me that life was not worth living if
we did not know love...

-Bell Hooks *All About Love*

Recipe: Beginning/making something with what's left

Ingredients:

Clay

Tools

Wire cutter

Wooden rib

Metal rib

Etching tools

Sticks

Leaves

Ware board

3 Memories of play

Candle

Incense

Tea

Owning

1) Standing in whatever is happening.

2) To know and embody the depth of knowledge I've gained from my life experience.
When I'm safely inside these sacred walls the incessant chatter of should and
shouldn't quiets and I am left alone to listen to my heart and follow my knowing
as she guides me.

[not as in ownership, rather taking responsibility, accountability]

2 scoops of Nikki Giovanni *Hands: for Mother's Day, The Life I Led*

and sprinkle in some Nina Simone *I wish I knew how it would be to be free*

Dash of Ibeyi *Ghosts*

Remedy: Making

Set up your space,
Remember this is a sacred space, a safe place.

Play some Ibeyi, or Nina, read some Nikki, thinking of the *Daughters of the Dust*.

Clean/order your workspace, clear the table, get some water, light a candle, burn some incense.

Take a moment to sit, what comes up, invite the feeling in like you would any guest...

Then,
wedge your clay making sure the wetness is right, soft and loose. let it do its job, grounding you to the earth.
design an idea in your head, begin with what you know, and listen to the clay to guide you. break it down into sections and trust. you can't be wrong; you will get what you need from this moment. you can't mess up, it's only dirt.

Next,
make a ball with the clay and pinch it into a shape you want to hold. Set it aside. Repeat. take two of the pieces and join them, slip and score if needed. Stack or roll you decide. Build up or out, joining as many as you like.
Create with your dreams, reach outside of what you think is possible, while listening to the clay, she will tell you what she needs. When you finish, cover loosely with plastic.

And then
when the clay is ready, use the tools to etch or carve to add texture, make hollows or holes, add protrusions or mounds. Use slip if wanted/needed. Escaping as you go, the worries tugging, chores awaiting. Listen as your feelings map your course.

After that
when dry, fire slow, you are more than halfway there. Think of the surface, the colors, the shine, what it will feel like in your hand, will you want to touch it.

fire.

Glaze.

Fire

Clay	1) Truth, solid confirmation in the realness of being. Truth is tangible, through my actions in making a tangible object.
Escape	2) Grounding in the earth, a rich base to build on. A place to begin.
Safety	A drug to cope with now.
	A place to relax, a moment to reflect, a time to be.



Harvest Feast Sculpture Progress 2017

How my path began...

When I began in art. I couldn't find a reason, I felt as though I shouldn't waste the time, the money, the energy. I knew better. It wasn't a way to make a living. I was barely making ends meet. But I would have all these dreams. I spent hours in my studio apartment making drawings, making songs and decorating my space.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately. To front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived...

-Henry David Thoreau *Walden Pond*

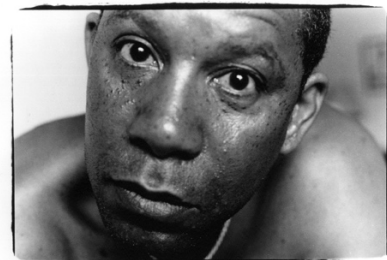
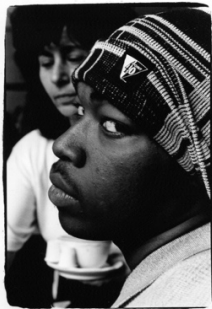
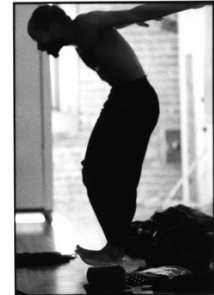
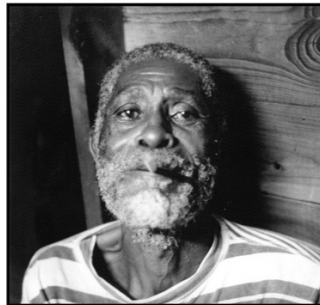
I made my curtains, covered my pillows, batiked fabrics. I learned to build bookshelves and tables. I reupholstered furniture. But it wasn't enough. I took my fathers camera and documented everything. Then I found clay, this felt useful.

I started reading. I read Alice Walker's, *The Temple of My Familiar*, Zora Neale Hurston's, *Their Eyes Were Watching god*. I went to Penumbra, the premier Black theatre and tried acting. Playing a part in *The King of Koons*. Reading the words of NTozake Shange *For Colored Girls*. I found a book by Langston Hughes and Roy DeCarava, *The Sweet Flypaper of life*. I began to see new worlds. I began to see myself in new ways.

I started taking pictures. To record* my life, to get an idea of how things look from the outside. I loved to catch a moment in the frame. To photograph people when they were telling their stories unselfconscious. Then when in the darkroom to be returned to that moment. As the photo comes into focus on the page. I read Toni Morrison, she said, "If there is a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, you must be the one to write it." I wanted a book of photos of *my* people, I wanted stories from *my* friends. I made work out of collecting these and found/made places to share them.

For the next decade as I documented my community my darkroom moved with me from Minneapolis to Washington DC to Milwaukee and back. Then I went into alternative schools in my community and taught them to do the same. I wanted to hear all the stories of the people I knew.

The first major piece I completed was my Black Male piece. This was in honor of the men who helped me when things became difficult in DC. I lost my housing; I lost my job and I had to couch surf to a few months. The hero's in my life were the black men who took me in. And to see the "Hyper predator" narrative surrounding black men by society was so far from who these men were. I wanted to show the love and kindness they possessed.



Black Male 1998

When I went into the classroom the response, I received from the students fed me. I taught in schools, parks, Galleries and hospitals. Anywhere I could, listening to stories, learning the things of importance in my students' lives. Understanding what decisions they had to make. I found that listening to them was everything. This is where I found my peers, the experience I'd had coming up in Minneapolis was common. Me being left out of the curriculum, no examples of the reality I was living into was ever shown.

As I thought of my teachers, Alice, James, Zora, Maya, Hettie, Skeet, Nikki, Uncle Joe, Murdear. I wanted to make a record of all the things I felt were important. I wanted to find a way to honor my teachers, my life with my practice. I was making meaning for myself, deciding what a life for me looks like.

*Record Proof of

Creating space to hold my dreams...

In the early 2000's I finally got a studio of my own. I built a darkroom in my studio. The first official darkroom that wasn't in a bathroom. I had about 700 sq ft at \$400 a month, it was on the second floor. I started inviting folks to gather. I worked with artists of any genre. We'd put on shows, present work and hang out eating. We had exhibition space, performance space, plays, video, writings/readings, poetry and always food. After a while I found a new space and it grew, we moved to The Center for Independent Artist, I bartered my photo skills for use of the space.



Studio 2019

RECIPE: Blessing

Ingredients:

Years of learning

Take all you have swallowed back

All that's fallen on deaf ears

A dash of Hooks

Ideas shared

Records,

Film

Voice recordings

Field recordings

Re'memory*

Light

Anger*

Breath*

1 scoop Adrienne

and a pinch of Zora

Doors, paint, gold leaf

Remedy: Making

Set up the space

Light a candle, burn some frankincense.

And then,

Regard the years of learning in silence, find words you would have used. Write them someplace safe*. Start with a hummm, move into a subtle moan, bang on places locked or stuck, shaking all the bones loose. Allow the words inside, simple they may be, to come out.

Or maybe,

Screech and wail, spin or turn, rock or bounce. You have my blessing to do what comes, no need to perfect it for viewing.

After that,

Now gather all the records, from books and boxes. And watch the picture come into view. A record to regard, re'memory trips the lock. The music held inside connects from Skeet to you. Memories, stories, lessons handed down to you. Breathe life into those stories.

now

mix and match and place each piece, listening to your guides. Add some spice, a pinch of Zora

'Course talkin don't amount tuh uh hill uh beans when yuh can't do nothin else...it's uh known fact, Pheoby, you got tuh *go* there tuh *know* there. (p182).

Then,

Add what you have to offer, each sound your contribution. A record of your pasts and presents to give the future. Knowing and knowing making your reason. Mapping those memories into a path.

Anger

- 1) Burning rage
- 2) righteous indignation
- 3) hurt turned toxic

Re'memory

the understanding of the meaning of the memory, the lesson is revealed.

Rest

a moment to breathe, reflect and regard.





Untitled, 2018

Barbershop

I went to pick him up. When I got there, he wasn't at the door like I expected. So, I parked my car in the turn around. As I came in the front door the lobby attendant pushed the button from her desk to unlock the door and let me in. I smiled and thanked her. I took the elevators even though he only lives one floor up. This building doesn't have easy access to stairs, and I don't know how to find them from the lobby. As I wait, I notice the elevator that has been "out of service" several times this summer is working. That's the elevator that comes. I remember hearing that the woman who had been stranded in it when it broke will no longer ride it. I hesitate but remember I don't know where the steps are and climb on.

When I get to his door, I let myself in. I can see he's sitting at the kitchen table. He's happy to see me. I enter and close the door behind me. In the kitchen, I notice he's looking at his food, but not really eating. I ask if he's finished. He turns up his lip and says, "she reheated yesterday's breakfast". We both share a laugh about her many and varied idiosyncrasies, but agree we love her anyway. I offer the option of getting a fresh breakfast, he agrees and suggests we throw this one away lest she reheat it a third time. We gather his coat and head out the door. I mention how I see improvements in his physical abilities. I tell him how much I love him. He focuses on balancing and walks slow, deliberate. When we get to the elevator conversation turns to the broken or now fixed elevator. It comes and we joke about getting stuck but take the risk together.

As we get off the elevator, I check in to see if he's feeling secure in his walking and "run" ahead to pull the car up. I move the car to the front door and park, go back to the entrance and he's just arriving. I hold both sets of doors open. He's anxious about them closing on him. That's how he fell and broke his arm last summer and I assure him I've got them. Then he gets in the car. Our first stop is McDonalds for a breakfast burrito. They are tiny and I think it can't be enough food, but he says it's perfect. I notice how little he needs to sustain himself. He weighs less than me these days. We drive to the barbershop.

When we arrive, I park and get him out of the car. The barber told me to use the back door, so we won't have to go up the steps. We are just coming around the car when the barber opens the rear door and tells us to just come in, he's finishing this client and will be right with us. The barber's name is Quantrell. A close friend has given me his name for my dad's haircut and shave. We introduce ourselves. Quantrell tells us to call him Trell and says, "sit wherever you want". He pulls out a chair for my dad. It's small and low and has no arms. My dad needs to grab the arms to balance when he's sitting. So, we use the other barber chair. The client leaves and Trell moves my father gently. He looks my dad in the eyes, holds his hands and tells him to trust him he won't let him fall. I'm grateful Trell's so thoughtful. He tells my dad he's changed the station to old R&B for him.

He asks my dad how he likes to brush his hair and proceeds to shave the hair from his ears and nose. Carefully with the precision of a master barber he begins to cut his hair. He asks my dad if he goes to a dermatologist "cuz it looks like he may have alopecia". He says he's not giving a diagnosis, but maybe. My dad doesn't know what that is. Trell explains that it's sometimes called worry spots. Because it can be caused by stress. It's when hair stops growing in patches where it used to but is different than normal balding. He shows the natural thinning of my dad's hair and points out the worry spot. We agree that this makes sense considering the stressful year he's had.

Now, It's time for the shave.

Trell has warm lather and applies it liberally over my father's beard. Then put a hot towel over his face to soften the hair. He takes care to work all the angles, all the while talking to my dad about everything. My dad has a glow over his face. He's looking at me with

love. I'm so happy to be in this little barber shop on Friday the thirteenth. When he's done Trell calculates the cost. Tells my dad it's \$28 for the cut and shave but is going to give him the senior discount so it's only \$20. My dad counters with he won't pay less than \$30, and it's settled. Trell gets my dad out of the chair with one quick swoop. We put on his jacket and we are out the door. When we get to the car, my father tells me how glad he is that I took him to *this* barber and lets me know he will need to do this every two week. I agree.

Recipe: Facing Loss

Ingredients:

Questions

Sadness

Wanting

Dreams

750 lb of clay

Ashes of leo

Hair of Morgan

Tears

30 minutes of Sweetgrass

3 scoops Du Bois

Cassandra

Kiln

Remedy: Making

Find a place

Breathe to release the knot in your gut. Raise your arms above your head and relax your shoulders. Play the music/words that ground you. Pull out the lies you've let live inside. Place them in light where you can see them. Use the pressure* of your weight to extrude the clay into coils. Place the shrink pad on the kiln shelves.

And then,

Remember your existence is legitimate. You are allowed to take up space. Place the first coils to find the shape. Make the walls strong. Take the remaining coils and place on top. Take the coils and fill the spaces that once held lies. Repeat until you feel the walls cannot sustain the weight. Take a break, rest. Listen to Robin and Du Bois. Repeat again and again until you are complete.

After that,

listen to the clay as she helps you build a new beginning. Start slow, be gentle, add a pocket here or a shelf here. Make a place to rest. Build with your hands, using pressure to note the time is passing, re'memory helping make sense of loss. With touch you make.

And now

When your world is built, embellish it with new ideas, add a window to see the sights. Inlay some gems to remind you of your preciousness.

a little later

Take the ashes and hair and paint them on the clay. Take the lies and place them in a ball of clay. Put the ball in the vessel. Put it all in the kiln, fire the kiln.

Adorn your new space. Listen to the Blue light til dawn Cassandra Willison "you don't know what love is". Stand in the owning of the moment.

Fear a feeling that lets you know what to pay attention to. a reason to stop and take care.

Black people love their children with a kind of obsession. You
are all we have, and you come to us endangered.

Ta-Nehisi Coats

First born

When I was 34, I got pregnant on March 2. I know because we were planning to have a child, we were in Ireland. Within three weeks I knew it had worked. I knew by the little things; smells were intense to a disturbing degree. I was nauseous most of the time and had a hard time eating. The first trimester was difficult. At my first doctor's appointment I explained I wasn't able to eat. The doctor said that was normal. When I came back for my second appointment 20 lb.'s lighter. They put me on an IV and gave me Zofran, a drug they give chemo patients to help with the nausea.

In the second trimester, the nausea subsided, and I was enjoying the idea that I was becoming a mother. I was photographing myself and others who were in my birth class. And we were all so excited and scared. My baby was so active, he was forever moving. If I sat down, he was jumping around. If I laid down, he was poking the mattress. It was amazing to feel his strength. I never worried about him because he was in the safest place. I was more worried about myself. Like he was gonna hurt me because he was so strong. Many reassured me that as he gets bigger, he'll have less room to move, he won't move as much, he will calm down. I was looking forward to that. We were all getting bigger. The others in the class were 4-6 weeks further along than I. But we were all about the same size. At my next appointment I asked the doctor about it.

The doctor said yes, I was big, I was big because I had extra amniotic fluid. This isn't bad and I shouldn't worry. This happens. We could take out some fluid, but we're not going to, because the worst that can happen is the baby can get tangled in the umbilical cord, she shrugged and said, but that never happens as she walked out. I went home with Leo jumping and moving. The next night I woke up when Leo jumped hard. He calmed down and I went back to sleep. That morning I got ready and went to work. During my shift, a friend was poking my stomach and I threatened him because this was the first time Leo was still and I didn't want to wake him. By the end of the day, I couldn't remember the last time Leo moved. I called a friend who had been pregnant, she told me to eat sugar, get the baby moving. By 8pm he still wasn't moving. So, I called the doctor and she said to go get it checked, it was probably nothing, just to be safe.

The assistant did an ultrasound, the doctor wasn't there. I had had some ultrasounds before so I could see that she couldn't find a heartbeat, but I had to wait for the doctor to come to tell me. My first thought was how do we resuscitate. When I asked and he said we don't. And then I said how do we get him out? he answered, you go through normal childbirth. I made an appointment to do it in a week. I called my partner, he came home, he was out of town. We decided to do it the next day.

Friday, we went in and they induced. The doctor said in these situations we usually can't know why this happens. Leo was born after three hours of pushing. I wouldn't stop bleeding and went unconscious, they stripped the bed, weighed the sheets to see how much blood I needed, while I watched from above, my partner in the corner facing the wall, his mother holding Leo wrapped in a blanket, the bed at an angle with my feet in the air.

The doctor said he had never seen a knot so tight in the umbilical cord.

When they brought my son to me, he was cold. I tried to wash him, but his skin started to peel away from his eyes when I bathed him. I wrapped him in a blanket and took out my camera, to make a record. Then I said goodbye to my first born.

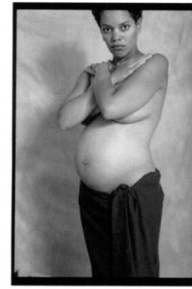
Or



remain
03.02.03-10.23.03



05.27.03



07.14.03



09.27.03



10.25.03



10.25.03

flying dream
 Was on the night of Leos birth
 Leo came at 11:40 pm
 With Leos birth I spent three hours
 Pushing
 losing time
 I lost time
 My heart was broken
 Fury
 I was furious
 And then he was born
 My mother-in-law or at the time
 My partners mom held him at the side of the bed
 I remember looking off and seeing him wrapped in her arms
 With each rock his mouth would open
 We'd hear the air move to fill the space
 And I'd think he's breathing
 I have photographs of him from that night
 I took so many photos of him
 And then I remember the room
 I remember looking down
 I saw my partner standing in the corner facing the wall
 I saw her holding Leo looking at me
 I saw me
 On the bed
 Sheets askew
 Trying to stop the bleeding
 Weighing the sheets
 I thought I can go to sleep now

I can close my eyes
Isn't this what I've wanted
I want out
But I saw him
In the corner
Facing the wall
Sobbing

I can sleep
I've been so tired

And then my heart went to him
He just lost his son
He watched a stillbirth
I can't leave him
I don't want to hurt him
I will care for him...
thought, he will love me

Breathe in and you start to remember things you didn't know you'd
forgotten.

-Robin Wall Kimmerer *Braiding Sweetgrass*

What Leo did with his life. He made sure I would always be grateful. Morgan came 18 months after Leo. Morgan was everything, I have never felt love like this. I feel a little sheepish because I really thought I wouldn't like having kids. I didn't know. For every milestone with Morgan I know I'm missing a milestone with Leo. He (Leo) showed me this new thing, a *good problem to have*. Before children I just had an easy time or a hard time, a good time or a bad time. Now, I have a problem I'm grateful to have because it means that my child, this human that I brought into the world is still with me. He's still breathing, he is my heart.

With Morgan I have a life I want to participate in. Life as in building my life rather than buying my life. Enriching my community with my contribution, accepting contributions from others, and making as much of what I need to survive as possible. So, I garden, can and freeze food to use over the winter. I make warm clothes by knitting and sewing. I make lamps, tables, curtains whatever I can to make my home. I keep a record of time with photographs, recordings, writing songs and document memories. Offering my skills when I can, giving gifts made by my hands. Community as in building trust with those who inhabit my work life, my home life, thinking of my impact on others and the world when and where I am. I work to join people through sharing food, handmade items and time. I create opportunities for people to come together to make, share food, music, and conversation. I also document these moments through the same tools.

Memory, honoring where I come from, who I come from, and what they taught me, I collect images, stories, and artifacts from my past, and extend it back as far as I can. Recording voices of my family and friends. Making art about the moments we have shared and ones that came before me. Weaving it all into a record of our existence.

History, remembering, honoring

Ancestry

My practice is a study in relationships. My relationships between the medium I'm working in and my relationships with those I'm in community with.

I am the line
On both sides there are songs
In my name.
-bi

-Nayyirah Waheed *Salt*



Full time mom 2005-2010

[Sound Duet with clay]

Recipe #4: Calm

Ingredients:

Sound makers

- 1 Guitar
- 1 Drum
- 3 undoon
- 1 loop pedal
- 1 amp/speaker
- 3 flutes
- 1 microphone

Remedy: Making

Make a place with all the instruments

Take the drum and play it. let it ring, find the different sounds it can make. Find one you like and lay it down.

now

take a second instrument, I like the undoon and find a sound that compliments the first loop

next

make some melody to fill in the empty spaces.

then

listen to what is playing and decide if you want to add your voice. Sing, moan, laugh, cry or scream.

In the mid 2000's I began *Art Church* with my clay studio. I opened it to my neighbors and friends. We would come together to make clay things, bind books, paint, write, make music. We spent our time sitting in community with each other.



Art Church 2010-2014

Recipe: Goodness/Touched*

Ingredients:

Clay
 Photos
 Letters
 Water
 Plant
 Instruments
 Drum
 Undoon
 Flutes
 Guitar
 Incense
 Iron wash
 Salt
 A dash of Zora, or maybe Hooks

Remedy:making

Set the space,

Burn incense, read some Hooks, Thich Nhat Hanh, gently breathe* in and stretch your limbs. Think about the type of people who brought you here.

“We have made something down here, they made us into a race, we made ourselves into a people. “

Ta-Nehisi Coates

Gather your objects that mean the most to you. Put them where you can see them.

Then you

Begin to build your foundation. Make sure it's strong, solid with places to rest*, a nook for your books. Think of what you want your walls to feel like. Will they be soft and yielding or firm and strong? Will there be hard lines or

smooth curves? Build slow and steady, listen deeply to the clay to tell you what you must do, what she needs, tend to her requests.

Now

Carve and paint and embellish with colors that soothe you, calm* or inspire.

After that

Fire her with slow steady heat, bringing her to a cone 1 and

the altar

I see this place, with colors of autumn browns and burgundy amber and gold, red like a fire and deep royal blues to purple. Curved and inviting with places to sit pockets to hold treasures. The light of the “Golden hour” shining. A fire crackling, the wind stirring up as the ancestors gather to take in the warmth. Looking into the flame getting lost in the dance of the fire.

Sounds*, Harper *Welcome to the Cruel World*, Aretha *Soul Serenade*, helped to soothe my heart, vibrations to calm.

*Breathe/e What allows us to be.

*Calm 1) Comfort in the current moment, worries gone, lacking anxiety.

2) When rest comes and wraps me in her warmth. Trust and compassion firmly hold my heart. Stress in my shoulders subsides and when my shoulders untangle my head frees up and I can breathe deep.

*Sound 1) a vibration used to recalibrate the heart/mind. Tonal changes move the mind into myriad spaces, invite calm, cleanse the pallet, shake loose the pain/hurt.

2) A portal into an altered place/space

*Touch 1) Connection, nourishment and richness of tactile replenishment. Taking the idea of relationship and solidifying it in a tangible moment. Touch is relationship in action.

2) Is an immediate visit. Bringing me out of the past/future to place me in now. Touch makes the past obsolete and the future solid. Touch is a place I can experience.

In 2015 My colleague and I collaborated in creating a practice. I had a great appreciation for her writing. She liked my ceramic esthetic, so we set out to enjoy a year of decadence by creating things for each other. We created for each other over 365 days. I received 41 handwritten notes through the mail. She received a full dinning set for 2 designed with her in mind, a tea pot and cups. This was making meaning, *moment ho'in**. After the year was over, we brought 15 of the “notes”, accompanied with 15 individual touchable sculptures for each note to the library and placed them in the stacks in a show named *Touched*. To share our moment with others.



In the late 2000's offered *Harvest Feast*. an evening of food from our gardens, dishes made to share, music to fill the evening. inviting the neighbors, friends, making plates, bowls and cups for everyone who comes to take with them.

Their art, like all art, means to delight the eye, console the troubled mind, appease the highest authority, and educate the children in the way of the world. The aim also whether or not articulated, is to infuse and sustain the family in an appreciation for life and the expectation of beauty.

-Maya Angelou *African Canvas*

Recipe: Building new worlds

Ingredients:

People
gardens
chef
musicians
tables
chairs
space a yard or a park
clay
Studio
Kiln

Remedy:

Set up the idea

go door to door, introduce yourself, invite your neighbors to visit. Ask about their needs, wants ideas of what they want in the neighborhood. Invite them to *make* in your studio. Invite them to donate from their gardens. Offer the option to just show up for the feast.

Then

Really have them come make. Make plates, cups or bowls, a casserole or a salad dish. Teach, or show or allow those with knowledge to share "how to's". Make the dishes you will eat on.

Remember to

go back around, let them know you are still here. Ask if they have needs. let them know your needs/wants. "Relationships grow at the speed of trust" - David Nicholson

then when

time is getting close, meet with the chef, find a menu. Call the musicians, secure the technical side. Tables, chairs, chef, music.

and again

Send out the flyers, invite all neighbors and friends.

now

setup the tables, chairs, call your friends they love to help, get the sound set up. Don't worry about how much food. Don't worry about how many ceramics. don't worry about sound. Only worry about making all feel welcome. let strays come play. Give freely and in the end. Let everyone who doesn't want to go home yet. help with cleanup and take all leftovers home.

let the *being* begin.

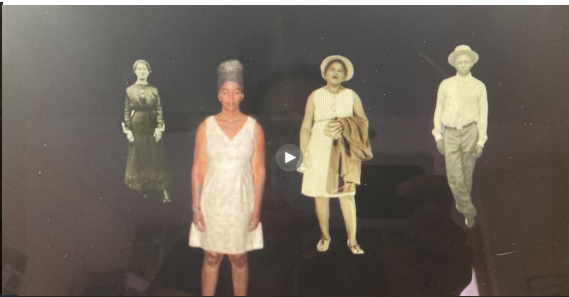


Harvest Feast 2016-2020

Every so often, ever so once in a while, some days a woman gets a chance to set in her window for a minute and look out.

-Langston Hughes *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*

I've now expanded to virtual reality. I've created a virtual world where I can visit my ancestors. Stand next to them, regard them, glean all that I can from considering them with the little scraps of stories I know of them. Remember they were once here.



Abide 2019

Ancestor Dreams 2021

RECIPE: Culmination THE FUTURE

Ingredients:

Home

Instruments

lessons on

Re'memory

record

time

Fear

dream

7 vessels

One broken

Leather bound journal

3 Candles

Some Leaves

1 cup rain Water

Salt

Something sweet

One Plate

Clay

Cloth made of cotton/wool

Ashes

Luisah/Virginia

Remedy: Making

Set up your space,

Take the items listed and gather in one place. Sit with them and invite your ancestors to join you. If you have a question, ask for the key. Regard these items with an open heart. Listen to what comes up. Write in the journal the questions, answers and dreams.

Next,

Take the instruments and begin to make some vibrations. Experiment with sounds, breath, space adding what moves you. Play until you find calm.

Then,

tune in to your feelings, use them as a guide. Use memories as maps to help in making order. Trust your knowing. What memories come up? Give them your attention.

After that,

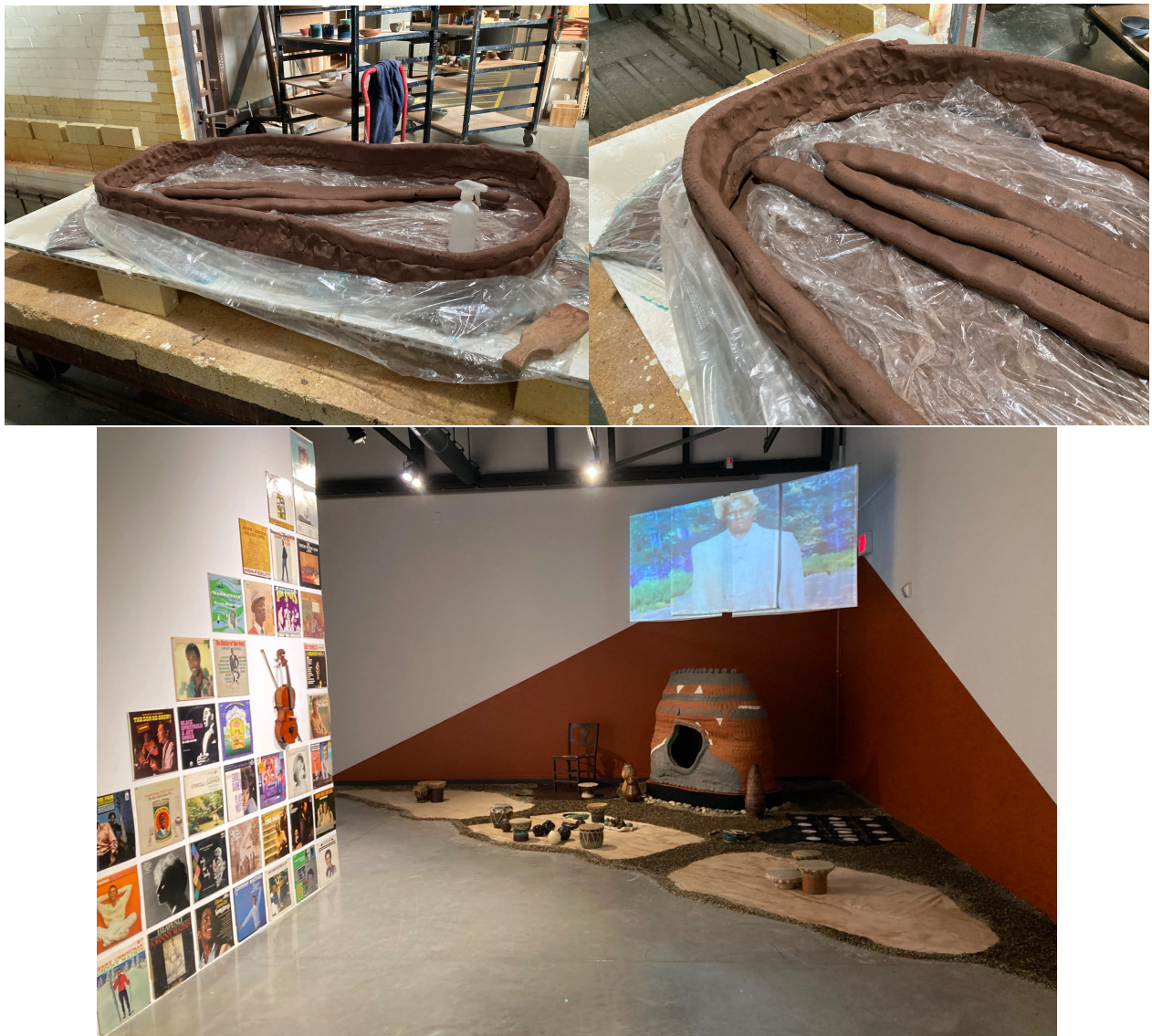
Take the plate and fill it with the sweet and savory treats, fill one vessel with water. Play the music and give thanks.

NOW

Moment Ho*

This would be a conscious design, but the knowledge is strictly implicit.

Ron Eglash, *African Fractals*



Other Worlds 2021

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